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ABSTRACT

Written as a reference for teachers of shorthand and transcription, this instructional guide is organized into three sections. The first section discusses the administration of the stenographic program and focuses on the needs, objectives, and organization of the program. Characteristics of occupational preparation programs are also noted. Section II presents seven stages of stenographic instruction: Teaching shorthand theory, reading shorthand plates, writing, dictation of familiar material, dictation of unfamiliar material, transcription, and mailable transcription. For each instructional stage a performance goal, teaching suggestions, and evaluation suggestions are included. The last section presents ways to increase the effectiveness of the stenographic program through student selection, homework assignments, timing procedures, the use of the shorthand laboratory, more realistic instruction, Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) competitive events, evaluation, and teacher enthusiasm. (BM)

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TEACHING SHORTHAND AND TRANSCRIPTION

AN INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

by

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FOREWORD

Shorthand and transcription skills continue to be essential to the communicating functions of office work. This guide will be useful to inexperienced and experienced teachers in giving proper direction and emphasis in instruction and in improving teaching procedures.

The content and instructional techniques described in this guide are offered as suggestions of what is good teaching methodology. The suggestions may be used for subject-oriented or block-time classes; they will apply to any system of shorthand that is being taught.

All teachers of shorthand and transcription are urged to exercise their creative efforts to adapt and expand these guidelines to serve the needs of individual students.

W. E. Campbell, Superintendent of
Public Instruction

Melvin H. Garner, Director, Division
of Vocational Education

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The skill of shorthand goes back to the days of the Roman Empire. Through the centuries many systems of shorthand have been developed; there are a number of systems which have been developed in this century. In spite of the fact that dictating equipment was developed some years ago and currently there is a move in large corporations to establish word processing centers, the need for shorthand has continued to increase. According to employment projections from the Department of Labor, the number of secretaries will continue to increase.

Teachers are encouraged to use this guide as a reference. The guide has been organized into sections which discuss:

1. Organization and Administration of the Stenographic Program
2. Stages of Stenographic Instruction
3. Increasing the Effectiveness of the Stenographic Program

This guide is written to discuss the more important aspects of teaching shorthand and transcription. A performance goal, teaching suggestions, and evaluation suggestions are given in each section related to the instructional program. These suggestions on teaching and evaluation are appropriate to provide assistance to Virginia's business teachers. The effectiveness of any method of teaching naturally is related to the individual capacities, interests, imagination, and personality of the teacher.

Carl E. Jorgensen
State Supervisor
Business Education Service

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Many teachers throughout Virginia have had a part, directly or indirectly, in the preparation of this publication. I gratefully acknowledge the contributions of a number of my graduate students, who developed background papers, and of Gloria Askew, Gloria Bardsley, Mildred Bell, Jacqueline Foster, Gail Riffle, Orpha Sadler, and Edith Townsel, who wrote preliminary drafts.

A special word of thanks is due Dr. B. June Schmidt, assistant state supervisor of business education, for her help in editing the manuscript and for her very constructive suggestions.

Although this instructional guide was written with the beginning teacher in mind, it is hoped that it will be a useful source of information for experienced teachers as well.

Walter L. Shell

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ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF THE STENOGRAPHIC PROGRAM

The Need for Stenographic Instruction

The demand for stenographic workers is acute. One need only glance at newspaper advertisements or talk with individuals from business and industry to become aware of the demand for well-prepared stenographers and secretaries. A shortage of such workers has existed for a number of years, and all indications are that this shortage will persist. Therefore, an increasing number of able students should be encouraged to enroll in stenographic programs in order to meet the occupational demand.

Clearly, a continuing need exists for quality stenographic education in the high school. You, the stenographic teacher, can play a significant role in preparing for employment the students who enroll in the program.

Once enrolled in a stenographic program, the student must be provided with superior stenographic preparation to ensure job success upon graduation. The stenographic graduate who can take dictation in shorthand and then transcribe it accurately and fluently will have little difficulty securing a job.

If you are a beginning stenographic teacher, this instructional guide was written primarily with you in mind. If you are an experienced teacher, perhaps it will be a useful source of information for you as well. In either case, it is hoped that it will aid you in your important task of preparing sorely needed stenographic workers for business.

Objectives of the Stenographic Program

The stenographic program is designed to serve students who wish to build the basic skills and knowledges needed for initial office employment. Upon completion of the program, each student should have developed the essential shorthand and transcription skills needed to qualify for an entry-level stenographic position.

Some students may select the stenographic programs for reasons other than the immediate vocational goal. They may have a prevocational objective and plan to continue their education beyond high school graduation. These students should receive the same instruction as those who plan to seek employment after completion of the high school stenographic program, since such preparation will best fit their long-range objectives.

Other students may select the course for personal-use or exploratory reasons. However, without the vocational objective, shorthand and transcription do not warrant the time and effort required to learn them. The student enrolled for personal-use or exploratory reasons should be informed of the vocational nature of the stenographic program.

Since shorthand is a tool that has little value in itself, transcription is the only real justification for learning it. For the student to transcribe successfully, however, the ability to write correct shorthand outlines must be developed. Even though the main objective of learning shorthand is the correct transcription of shorthand outlines, the ability or lack of ability to write accurate outlines has a great influence on student ability to transcribe correctly. The two primary objectives of shorthand and transcription, then, are to write accurate shorthand outlines in context and to be able to transcribe shorthand correctly and fluently.

Organization of the Stenographic Program

The main objective of the stenographic program is to develop vocational competence—that is, to prepare for a stenographic job. Since the stenographic skills of the student should be developed to their highest level possible at the time of graduation and employment, the stenographic program should not be offered before the junior year of high school.

Generally, two years of stenographic preparation are required to attain sufficient skill for employment. The student begins the program in the junior year and then continues it during the senior year in order to develop shorthand and transcription skills to an employable level.

Since 1968, the Business Education Service of the Department of Education in Virginia has encouraged a shift from traditional single-subject classes to occupational preparation programs. The rationale for these programs, which involve the use of a block of time daily, is that they represent a more effective approach than the traditional single-subject approach for attaining vocational competence. Characteristics that distinguish the programs from traditional single-subject offerings include (1) utilization of a block of time, usually two class periods in length, each day; (2) learning attained through an integrated approach and experiences simulating office conditions; and (3) emphasis on the development of total occupational competence, including behavior and attitudes, of the future office worker.

A general business course and a year of typewriting are prerequisites for entrance into the occupational preparation programs. Then, during the junior and senior years, a student selecting the stenographic program enrolls in a course that requires a two- to three-hour period of time daily. The basic skills of shorthand and transcription are the main areas of instruction, but attention is also given to other skills and knowledges needed by a stenographer or secretary. These include telephone and reception techniques, filing and records management, recordkeeping, mailing procedures, business communications, and the use of duplicating, transcribing, and calculating machines.

The suggested course sequence for stenographic preparation is as follows:

Business Exploration (optional)	8th Grade
General Business	9th Grade
Typewriting	10th Grade
Stenography I (Prerequisites: General Business and Typewriting)	11th Grade
Stenography II with Cooperative Office Education (optional)	12th Grade

The credit awarded for the occupational preparation programs is based on one credit per hour per year. Thus, two or three credits would be earned by the student for each of the junior and senior years, making a total of four to six credits possible for the two-year stenographic program, with additional credit earned for participation in a cooperative program. The credits are comparable to those that would be earned for Shorthand I and II, Typewriting II, Office Practice, and other similar subjects that the student might choose under a traditional single-subject business education program.

Characteristics of Occupational Preparation Programs

To be an effective teacher of a stenographic occupational preparation program, you must first understand how such a program differs from conventional business education classes. The principal distinguishing characteristics of a stenographic occupational preparation program, in greatly abbreviated form, are as follows:

1. *Job Emphasis.* An occupational preparation program is job-oriented rather than course-oriented. The emphasis in a stenographic program is not on shorthand and transcription as isolated skills but on a stenographer's or secretary's job and all the components that constitute that job.

2. *Blocks of Time.* An occupational preparation program meets for a block of time rather than for single class periods. Most classes meet for two periods. Bells are not necessarily observed. The time should not be used as simply two separate class periods tacked together.

3. *Integration of Content.* An occupational preparation program emphasizes integration of content. This concept makes learning more realistic. Students see how the different elements of a job fit together; they better understand the relationships among the various tasks of a job. An effort is made in the classroom to integrate the student's shorthand and transcription skills with other learning components such as office machines, reprographics, records management, recordkeeping, secretarial procedures, and business behavior and psychology.

4. *Instructional Units.* An occupational preparation program is based on instructional units. For example, business principles and organization may be an instructional unit of 60 hours; business law, 30 hours; and receptionist-telephone training, 15 hours. Ordinarily, the hours devoted to the various instructional units are scattered throughout the program. The teacher would not teach 60 continuous class hours of business principles and organization but would integrate the 60 hours with other units of instruction.

5. *Variety of Instructional Sources.* The subject matter content is selected from various sources rather than from a single textbook, and topics in any one source are not necessarily followed in sequence. The teacher selects the relevant topics from the learning sources available and determines the sequence in which the topics will be studied.

STAGES OF INSTRUCTION IN SHORTHAND AND TRANSCRIPTION

Teaching of Shorthand Theory

The first task you face as a teacher of beginning shorthand is to help your students develop a solid foundation in the principles of the shorthand system. Success in the later stages of shorthand learning may depend to a great extent on how well you taught the theory in the early days of instruction.

PERFORMANCE GOAL: The students should be able to demonstrate their *knowledge of shorthand theory* (principles and brief forms) by

Making satisfactory scores on periodic vocabulary quizzes consisting of words representative of the shorthand principles previously studied.

Reading, transcribing, and writing the brief forms of the system rapidly and with 100 percent accuracy.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Presentation of Theory

Theory presentations must be well planned if they are to be as effective as you want them to be. Six general suggestions will be offered here. For more detailed information, you should study the teacher's manual that accompanies the textbook.

1. In presenting new theory principles, teach *all* the new words, not just a sample of them. If you teach the new words completely, it should not be necessary to reteach or review them the next day in class.
2. Write the outlines on the board (or on the overhead projector) as you teach them. Outlines should not be placed on the board before class.
3. Start new-theory presentations at the beginning of the period when the students are most alert and attentive. Alternate the teaching of new theory with other learning activities throughout the class period.
4. Be sure that students are giving undivided attention to the chalkboard (or overhead projector) presentation. *Students' books should be closed.* Do not permit students to write when you are writing on the board; they should be observing your writing to see the direction in which the symbols go.
5. Write your theory presentation for each lesson on a 3" by 5" or a 4" by 6" index card. Since an index card is light in weight and fits nicely into the hand, it is much easier to manage than the textbook.
6. Spell the shorthand outlines consistently according to the authors' recommendations. This consistency reduces confusion if students are assigned to a different teacher in the next course. It is wise to study carefully the authors' suggestions for spelling the various shorthand sounds before you present each new lesson.

*Efficient Use of the Chalkboard**

So that you can review intermittently throughout the period with the students all the outlines that constitute the learning in a new lesson, you must use the chalkboard space efficiently. Here are four suggestions that will enable you to have all the outlines of a new lesson on the board at one time and make it unnecessary to erase any of them to make room for more.

1. Write the outlines on the board in blocks instead of stringing them across the board in lines. Blocking the outlines saves room, requires less movement on your part as you point at random to the various outlines, and requires shorter eye jumps on the part of the students.
2. Write the outlines relatively high on the chalkboard. They will not be seen by many of the students if they are too low.
3. Write the outlines large enough to be easily seen but not so large that chalkboard space is wasted. Outlines that are too small cannot be read easily by students in the rear of the classroom, and outlines that are too large tend to look distorted.
4. Keep the outlines relatively close together. Excessive spreading of outlines wastes board space, forces you to move around too much when pointing to the outlines, and requires the students to make unnecessarily wide and uncomfortable eye movements.

EVALUATION SUGGESTIONS

Vocabulary Quizzes

The vocabulary quiz (sometimes called a "word list test" or "theory test") is an effective device for testing students' knowledge of shorthand theory. It is also an excellent way of emphasizing to students the importance of studying and learning shorthand theory well—in short, a powerful stimulus to good homework preparation.

1. Give vocabulary quizzes frequently. During the early stages of shorthand instruction, the quizzes can profitably be given once, or perhaps even twice, a week. They should not be given, of course, until students can write well enough to construct simple shorthand outlines with a modicum of fluency.
2. Give the quiz at the beginning of the period. Students will come to class with a certain amount of preoccupation about the quiz, and you might as well relieve the suspense as soon as possible.
3. Select between 10 and 20 outlines. Fewer than 10 may not give an adequate coverage of the theory you want to test; more than 20 may consume a disproportionate amount of class time.
4. Choose words that are representative of the theory learned. Certainly you will not select only the most difficult words, but neither should you select only the easiest one.
5. Dictate the words. Dictating them enables you to prepare and administer the quiz quickly and efficiently.
6. Do not repeat at the end of the quiz. If you say each word twice and pronounce it distinctly, repeating any or all of the words at the completion of the quiz is unnecessary and wasteful of class time.
7. Provide immediate knowledge of results. After you take up the quiz, go over the outlines with the class right away. The students need this knowledge of results *immediately*, not tomorrow.
8. Score on the shorthand outlines only. The purpose of a vocabulary quiz is to judge the students' ability to write

*Although the discussion here refers to the use of the chalkboard in theory presentations, the overhead projector can be used effectively, too. In fact, many teachers now prefer the use of the overhead projector over the chalkboard as a tool for teaching shorthand.

shorthand outlines correctly, not to judge their ability to transcribe.

9. Be generous about proportion and placement. The main criterion should be that the outlines are written legibly and according to principle, not that they be written beautifully.

Reading, Transcribing, and Writing Brief Forms

The students' knowledge of isolated brief forms is relatively easy to evaluate. Three types of measurement will be mentioned. Due to time limitations, however, you might not be able to use all three, in which case you would restrict yourself to only one or two of them. These techniques lend themselves especially well to informal evaluation in the form of drills; it is not recommended that they be used as the basis for grades.

1. After the introduction and study of all the brief forms, periodically time one or two students as they read aloud all the meanings of all the brief forms. Each student's goal is rapid reading with 100 percent accuracy.
2. After the introduction and study of all the brief forms, periodically time the students as they transcribe (in longhand or at the typewriter) all the meanings of all the brief forms. Each student's goal is rapid transcription with 100 percent accuracy.
3. After the introduction and study of all the brief forms, periodically time the students as they write in shorthand all the brief forms as they are dictated rapidly by the teacher. Each student's goal is rapid writing with 100 percent accuracy.

Reading from Shorthand Plates

Although the extent of transfer is not known precisely, a transfer between the ability to read shorthand rapidly and the ability to write it rapidly does appear to exist. The fluent reading of shorthand—reading that is smooth, flowing, and relatively free of hesitations—should be emphasized from the very beginning of the very first shorthand course.

PERFORMANCE GOAL: The students should be able to demonstrate their *ability to read shorthand* by

Reading aloud from familiar textbook plate material rapidly and accurately.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Developing Fluent Reading

One of the desirable early symptoms of shorthand learning is fluent reading. If your students read hesitatingly and have to be prompted frequently, they are not preparing their homework reading assignments as well as they should.

1. Insist on fluent reading from the start. When students that you know can do better read poorly time after time, you may need to find ways to motivate them to prepare their homework reading assignments more thoroughly and faithfully.
2. When students read fluently, instructional time can be used more economically. Students who have to be prompted every several words and who must stop and spell out too many outlines are wasting valuable class time that can be better used in other ways.

3. Most shorthand reading should be done individually. You cannot judge an individual student's reading ability very well unless you ask the student to read alone.

4. Call on students to read in random order. One plan for selecting students at random is to write each student's name on an index card. The pack of cards is shuffled every day, and students are called upon to read as their individual cards appear.

5. Call on every student to read every day. This procedure will give you daily feedback on the reading ability of every member of the class.

6. Have students spell and read each outline in the reading assignment for the first half-dozen lessons or so. From then on, the spelling of individual outlines should be omitted and the outlines read as wholes. When a student is unable to do so, the student should be encouraged, of course, to spell out any troublesome outlines.

7. During class reading, prompt students almost immediately when they hesitate over outlines. Wait a moment to give the student a chance to figure out the word by spelling out the shorthand sounds, but don't prolong the agony. Immediate prompting saves time and makes for a livelier classroom pace.

8. Try to save five minutes or so at the end of the class period for individual sight reading from tomorrow's lesson. If done on an individual basis, this type of reading provides excellent feedback on the students' ability to read unrehearsed shorthand plates.

EVALUATION SUGGESTIONS

Timed Reading of Familiar Textbook Plate Material

In the earliest stages of shorthand instruction, reading should be fluent but not timed. Later, however, you may find that student enthusiasm begins to wane. Timed reading from familiar textbook plates may be just the device you need to perk up their interest again. Don't be surprised if some of your students eventually attain reading rates of well above 200 words a minute on well-rehearsed material!

1. Ask individual students to read aloud from their textbook as you time them for one minute. If you prefer to use only a half minute, simply double the number of words to get the reading rate for a full minute.

2. You will find the mechanics of timing relatively simple if you have each student start reading at the beginning of the next letter rather than at the exact point where the previous student finished.

3. So that you can readily figure students' reading rates, copy from the transcript to the shorthand plate in your copy of the textbook the superior numbers that you use for timing dictation. Since there are 20 standard words between superior numbers, computing reading scores can be done quickly and easily.

Introduction to Writing

When the writing of shorthand is introduced will depend on whether you use a reading or writing approach. The following suggestions are based on the assumption that writing is delayed for at least several lessons.

PERFORMANCE GOAL: The students should be able to demonstrate their *ability to form written shorthand outlines* by

Writing familiar short and easy words, sentences, and paragraphs fluently and in a natural, comfortable writing position.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

First Attempts at Writing

Whether writing is introduced relatively early or later, the teaching procedure will be somewhat as follows:

1. Preparatory to writing, tell the students to bring to class a shorthand pad and a free-flowing pen. The important characteristic of the pen is that it should write easily without skipping.
2. The first attempts at writing by the students will be more successful if you demonstrate the writing of the shorthand and then have them imitate you. Write an outline on the board (or on the overhead projector) two or three times, spelling it as you write. Then have the students imitate the procedure by writing the outline themselves two or three times. Follow up with additional outlines.
3. Caution the students to *write*, not to *draw*, their outlines. Stress that the important thing in writing shorthand is fluency rather than the beauty of the outlines. At this point emphasize the *process* rather than the *product*.
4. Although the first attempts at writing will be awkward, they should not be laboriously slow. Students must be taught from the very beginning of writing practice to write fluently and without undue hesitation.
5. Limit the first attempts at writing to a few minutes — perhaps 10 minutes or so a day. The major portion of the class time should be devoted to chalkboard drill and to individual reading from shorthand plates.
6. After several days of writing isolated outlines, the students will be ready to write complete sentences. Select a familiar sentence from the previous night's homework and follow essentially the same procedure as that suggested for isolated outlines. Again you demonstrate and the students imitate.
7. After several days of writing sentences, move on to the next step— the dictation of easy paragraphs and letters. The teaching procedure remains the same: demonstration and imitation.
8. Do not require students to write in any particular position. Simply encourage each to write in a manner that is natural and comfortable. Have each student experiment with different writing positions from time to time to find the one that is most natural and comfortable.

EVALUATION SUGGESTIONS

Informal Evaluation of Students

Your evaluation of the students' initial attempts at writing will be informal. Under no circumstances should students be graded as they learn the basic procedures involved in constructing shorthand outlines.

1. Check that the students are writing with a pen that flows freely without skipping and has at least a moderately fine point.
2. Check that the students are writing rather than drawing their outlines.
3. Check that the students are writing in a natural and comfortable position.

Dictation of Familiar Material

Familiar dictation serves as a convenient transitional stage from the first attempts at writing, described in the preceding section, to the dictation of unfamiliar material. Make this transitional stage *short*, however. Progress as soon as practicable to unfamiliar material.

PERFORMANCE GOAL: The students should be able to demonstrate their *ability to write shorthand from familiar dictation* by

Taking short (approximately 1-2 minutes), practiced letters from previously assigned homework assignments and reading back the shorthand notes accurately.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Introduction to Familiar Dictation

Assume that yesterday you selected as a part of last night's homework assignment one or two relatively short and easy letters from today's lesson to be practiced several times. These, then, are the letters to be emphasized in class today.

1. Since students have already had an opportunity to practice the letters, they need not be previewed. To do so, in fact, would generally not be an effective use of class time.
2. Avoid the temptation to make the initial dictation rate too low. If you must, start at 50 words per minute (wpm); but increase the rate to 60 after three or four days.
3. To keep the dictation takes short, break down the letter into two or three parts and dictate the parts separately before dictating the entire letter as a unit.
4. Very little familiar dictation should be read back. Since this is practiced material, not much will be gained from reading back at this point. Reading back is of much greater value later when students take new-matter dictation.
5. Dictate each letter a limited number of times. Usually it is advisable to dictate the letter not more than four times (at 60-70-80-70 wpm, perhaps).
6. An alternative to an accelerating-and-dropback pattern (60-70-80-70 wpm, for example) is the micromolar dictation plan. Under this plan, the dictation is given at a constant rate, perhaps 100 wpm; the length of the dictation is varied rather than the rate.

EVALUATION SUGGESTIONS

Informal Evaluation of Students

Familiar dictation does not provide a valid indication of a student's ability to write shorthand from dictation; it tends to provide only a measure of memory. As a result, formal evaluations (grades) based on familiar dictation are weak and inaccurate indicators of student ability. Little (if any) of your formal evaluation, therefore, should be based on familiar dictation. Informal evaluation is suggested instead.

1. At the end of each take, ask the students who got the dictation to raise their hands.
2. Have an occasional take read back aloud. Ask each student you call on to read a sentence or two.

Dictation of Unfamiliar Material

The dictation of unpracticed material is a more productive use of class time than the dictation of practiced material. It is recommended, therefore, that new-matter dictation be introduced relatively early, preferably even before all the shorthand theory has been covered. As long as the material is graded (so that the dictation will not contain points of theory that have not yet been studied), there is no need to wait until the completion of all the theory.

PERFORMANCE GOAL: The students should be able to demonstrate their *ability to write shorthand from unfamiliar dictation* by

Taking unpracticed material for 3 (or 5) minutes and transcribing it with 95 percent accuracy within 15 (or 25) minutes.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Introduction to Unfamiliar Dictation

You should begin, of course, with low dictation rates on short, easy material and then progress gradually to higher rates on longer, more challenging material.

1. When new-matter dictation is introduced, a preview of potentially troublesome shorthand outlines should be given. The preview should be liberal at first and less liberal later on. Eventually a point will be reached when a *postview* will be more effective than a *preview*.
2. Begin with short letters. Gradually, however, shorter letters must be replaced by 3- or 5-minute letters if the students are to be evaluated on 3- or 5-minute letters. The principle here is one of transfer: If the students are to be tested on 3- or 5-minute letters, their daily speed-building practice must also be largely on 3- or 5-minute letters.
3. Although the reading back of shorthand notes has a good deal more value for unfamiliar dictation than for familiar dictation, not much class time can be afforded for the reading back of notes even for unfamiliar dictation. Your class time is usually more profitably spent in dictating than in reading back.
4. Spend the great bulk of class time on new dictation, not familiar dictation. The almost exclusive use of new material represents a better use of learning time.

A Basic Speed-Building Plan for Three-Minute Letters

The following speed-building plan, which illustrates an accelerating-and-dropback pattern (70-80-90-80 wpm, for example), is only one of a number that may be used in shorthand classes. It is presented here because of its simplicity.

Although the reference here is to 3-minute letters, the same plan is equally applicable to 5-minute letters.

Assume in the following example that the dictation goal is 80 wpm.

1. Divide the letter into three one-minute segments.
2. Preview* on the chalkboard or overhead projector several difficult outlines from the first minute. Have the students write each outline several times, writing rapidly but legibly.
3. Dictate the first minute at 70 wpm. Have this take read back, instructing the students to circle any troublesome outlines.
4. Ask for troublesome outlines and add them to the ones already on the chalkboard or overhead projector.
5. Dictate the first minute at 80 wpm. This take need not be read back.
6. Dictate the first minute at 90 wpm. This take need not be read back.
7. Repeat Steps 2-6 for the second minute.
8. Repeat Steps 2-6 for the third minute.
9. Dictate the entire three-minute take at 80 wpm (the goal rate).

EVALUATION SUGGESTIONS

Progress Takes (Dictation Speed Tests)

A progress take (a more attractive and less threatening term than "dictation speed test") is primarily a measure of shorthand *speed*, not of accuracy. Its purpose is to indicate whether the student has reached a certain level of shorthand writing achievement and is therefore ready to advance to the next level.

Consequently, students should be encouraged to move on to new speed levels as soon as possible without undue attention to accuracy. The error allowance should be generous. A 100 wpm take with 15 errors is better than an 80 wpm take with no errors; the student with no errors is perhaps being unduly cautious and needs to forge ahead to the next speed level.

1. Progress takes on unfamiliar material may profitably be given about once a week or perhaps once every two weeks. At the end of the grading period, they may be given more often —perhaps every day during the last week.
2. Most teachers prefer progress takes that are 3 minutes long; others prefer 5 minutes. Three-minute takes save both dictation and transcription time and are adequate for grading purposes except possibly in the final course, when it may be preferable to use 5-minute takes.
3. The usual error allowance is 5 percent, although some teachers allow a smaller percentage of error. Since the primary emphasis in a progress take is on shorthand speed and not shorthand accuracy, it follows that the error allowance should be relatively generous.
4. For 3-minute takes, a transcribing time of 15 minutes is adequate; for 5-minute takes, 25 minutes. The time allowed for transcribing must be accurate and consistent; it should not be approximate ("take the rest of the period"). All students should begin transcribing at exactly the same time.
5. Some teachers stipulate that the takes be transcribed in longhand;

*Eventually the preview should be omitted and a postview of difficult outlines used instead.

others require that the typewriter be used. Still others leave the choice up to the individual student. However, after the initial stages of instruction, the use of the typewriter for transcription purposes is preferable.

6. Progress takes can be given as long as the student takes shorthand and is attempting to increase shorthand speed. In the terminal stages of training, however, when transcription receives the primary emphasis, progress takes should be relegated to a secondary position.

Scoring Progress Takes

Progress takes are usually scored on the basis of "passed" or "not passed." A widely used plan among shorthand teachers is to require that the student pass three takes at a particular dictation rate to qualify for a certain grade.

1. No reference need be made to the shorthand notes in scoring, although they may be collected with the transcript. It is worthwhile, however, to note whether some students are writing excessive English in their notes. Such students are penalizing themselves by trying to think in two "languages."
2. For the sake of test validity, take off only for shorthand errors; a progress take is a test of shorthand *speed*, not of transcription ability. Spelling, punctuation, and other types of English errors should be marked but not counted.
3. A helpful device when marking the transcripts is to use two colors of ink to distinguish between shorthand and nonshorthand errors.
4. It is neither necessary nor desirable to relate the number of errors to a grade: 0-3 (A), 4-6 (B), etc. Such a practice defeats the purpose of the progress take. It is sufficient to score on the basis of whether the take was passed or not. This is one time when a highly precise scoring device is not needed.

Introduction to Transcription

In recent years a trend toward the earlier introduction of typewritten transcription has become increasingly pronounced. Many teachers are now actively teaching transcription techniques almost from the start of shorthand instruction. Since the value of shorthand lies in its accurate transcription, typewritten transcription is justifiably receiving more attention at all stages of shorthand instruction than has commonly been the practice in the past.

PERFORMANCE GOAL: The students should be able to demonstrate their *ability to transcribe on the typewriter at an introductory level* by

Transcribing from shorthand plates in the textbook, from shorthand notes written previously for homework, and from familiar dictation.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Early Typewritten Transcription

The plan outlined below can be used successfully to introduce students to the transcribing process during the beginning shorthand course. Since it is suggestive rather than prescriptive, you should not hesitate to modify it whenever you feel it is desirable to do so.

This teaching plan is based on the premise that in the early stages of shorthand instruction

no more than 10 to 15 minutes (preferably the last 10 or 15 minutes of the class period) should normally be spent on transcription. Since the primary emphasis during the first course is on shorthand theory, transcription—despite its importance—must not be allowed to consume a disproportionate amount of class time.

1. The first transcription may be done from *words* written in shorthand on the chalkboard (or on a transparency). As you write each outline, have the students transcribe it on their typewriters two or three times. After two or three days of transcribing words, progress to *phrases* and then to *sentences.*

2. After a week or two of transcribing words, phrases, and sentences from the chalkboard (or overhead projector), next introduce the students to transcription from *shorthand plates* in the textbook. Ask a student to read a short letter from last night's homework. Now have the class try transcribing on their typewriters, in straight-copy form, the letter from the shorthand plate. Tell the students that after they finish transcribing the letter, they should circle their typographical errors while the transcripts are still in the typewriters. Then read the letter to the students and ask how many transcribed it correctly. If time remains, go on to another letter.

3. When you feel that most of the class can transcribe from textbook shorthand plates with reasonable fluency, proceed to the typewritten transcription of the *students' shorthand notes written previously for homework.* Choose a letter from last night's homework and instruct the students to transcribe it, in straight-copy form, from their own shorthand notes. Tell them that after they finish transcribing the letter, they should circle their typographical errors while the transcripts are still in the typewriters. Then read the letter to the students and ask how many transcribed it correctly. If time remains, go on to another letter.

4. When you feel that most of the class can transcribe with reasonable proficiency from their own shorthand notes written for homework, move on to the transcription of *familiar dictation.* Dictate an assigned letter from last night's homework. (Be sure that the dictation is at a low enough rate to enable most of the class members to get it. If you find that the notes have large gaps in them, either lower the dictation rate or postpone this step until the class has improved its ability to write from dictation.) Instruct the students to transcribe the letter, in straight-copy form, from their shorthand notes. Have them circle their typographical errors while their transcripts are still in the typewriters. Then read the letter to the students and ask how many transcribed it correctly. If time remains, go on to another letter.

5. When you feel that most of the class has attained the ability to transcribe familiar dictation in straight-copy form, *change the format from straight-copy setup to letter setup.* At this point help the students learn to set up letters attractively by teaching them how to judge the length of each letter by the amount of space the shorthand notes occupy.

6. Thus far students have circled but have not corrected their typographical errors. At this point the correction of errors may be introduced if you wish.

7. As a part of the typewritten transcription practice, you may want to have students figure their transcription rate. This procedure provides a means of informally measur-

ing daily progress. Although transcription rate is an artificial type of measurement, it does serve to provide a challenge to the students and permits them to compare one performance effort with another.

8. The emphasis in this introduction to typewritten transcription has properly been on practice from contextual materials. However, there are, in addition, other types of practice materials in the shorthand textbook that you can readily develop into worthwhile transcription drills. Such drills might include transcribing lists of theory words and brief forms under time, transcribing sentences that illustrate the use of various marks of punctuation, and transcribing outlines that are frequently misspelled in English or that are frequently mistranscribed. The textbook provides almost endless opportunities for the development of useful typewritten transcription drills.

It should be noted that the introduction to transcription discussed in this section has been confined to the transcription of familiar dictation. The transcription of unfamiliar dictation is considered in the section entitled "Mailable Transcription."

EVALUATION SUGGESTIONS

Informal Evaluation of Students

Throughout this introduction to typewritten transcription, the emphasis has properly been on the transcribing *process* (the development of correct transcribing techniques) rather than the *product* (mailable transcripts). Accordingly, none of the students' early transcribing efforts should be graded. The typewritten transcription practice to this point has been just that—practice. The only appropriate evaluation for practice work is informal evaluation.

1. Check that the students are using correct transcribing techniques: keeping the typewriter carriage moving, keeping their eyes on the shorthand notes, and reading their notes in thought groups.
2. Use informal feedback from students as a means of determining progress. At the end of each drill ask for a show of hands as an indication of how many students achieved the purpose of the drill.

Mailable Transcription

The ultimate product of the shorthand-transcription process is, of course, a mailable letter—one that is correct in form and content, that is attractive in appearance, and that a discerning employer has no hesitation in signing. Consequently, development of the ability to produce mailable transcripts becomes an extremely important element in stenographic instruction.

In the advanced stages of shorthand and transcription instruction, transcription practice should consume the greatest proportion of class time. It should be the predominant activity; all other activities are secondary.

PERFORMANCE GOAL: The students should be able to demonstrate their *ability to transcribe on the typewriter at an advanced level* by

Transcribing mailable business letters from unfamiliar dictation.

TEACHING SUGGESTIONS

Transcription from Unfamiliar Dictation

After students have gained reasonable proficiency in transcribing from *familiar dictation*, as described in the preceding pages, the next logical step is transcribing from *unfamiliar dictation*. Until now the emphasis has been on the *process*—transcription technique. Now, although good technique should continue to be stressed, the primary emphasis is now focused on the *product*—mailable letters.

The most realistic and productive type of transcription practice for the student in the terminal stages of instruction includes the following steps: taking a letter, transcribing the letter under time, figuring the transcription rate, reading the letter for correctness, checking for mailability, and identifying weaknesses that require remedial instruction. The teacher's role in these steps is explained in the transcription practice plan that follows.

1. Dictate an unfamiliar, unpreviewed letter to the class. (Start with shorter letters and gradually progress to longer ones.)
2. Be sure that the dictation is at a low enough rate to enable most of the class members to get it. (Students must have shorthand notes to transcribe from!) If the notes have large gaps in them, either lower the dictation rate or postpone this step until the class has improved its ability to write from dictation. (Start with lower dictation rates and gradually progress to higher rates.)
3. Using a stopwatch, have the students transcribe the letter as you time them. The letter should be typed in proper letter form, and errors should be corrected.
4. Have the students figure their individual transcription rates. While they are transcribing, write on the chalkboard the number of words in the letter (including the number of words in the date, inside address, and signature elements). As students raise their hands to indicate that they have finished transcribing the letter, announce and write on the board the time to the nearest quarter-minute. The students then divide the number of words by the elapsed time to obtain the transcription rate.
5. Read the letter to the class, calling attention to all the potential trouble spots, such as punctuation, capitalization, expression of numbers, and commonly misspelled words.
6. Ask how many students transcribed a mailable letter. This procedure provides you with immediate feedback on student performance and progress.
7. Ask if there are any questions about the letter. This procedure provides an opportunity for instant remedial teaching.
8. Go on to another letter. Cover as many letters in this fashion as possible in the remaining class time.
9. Later, include in the practice the typing of carbon copies and envelopes.
10. In addition to the transcription practice on individual letters, also provide frequent practice for longer periods of time. The principle here is one of transfer: If the students are to be tested for periods of at least 30 continuous minutes (as explained below), their transcription practice must also provide for periods of at least 30 continuous minutes.
11. Continue to emphasize transcription drills focusing on punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, commonly misspelled words, similar words, expression of numbers, and word division. Such drills are indispensa-

ble in developing the ability to produce mailable transcripts.

EVALUATION SUGGESTIONS

Transcription Production Tests

A transcription production test is a measure of the student's ability to combine the separate elements of shorthand skill, typing skill, and English knowledge into a mailable transcribed letter. Both quality and quantity become important considerations, for both are essential for satisfactory job performance.

1. Transcription production tests may profitably be given about once a week or perhaps once every two weeks. At the end of the grading period, they may be given more often—perhaps every day during the last week.
2. The test material should consist of new and unpreviewed business letters. Familiar material for transcription testing purposes is both unrealistic and invalid.
3. The transcription time should consist of at least 30 continuous minutes so that students can demonstrate their ability to transcribe several letters over a period of time that corresponds more nearly to a realistic office situation.
4. Students should be carefully timed during the transcription; it is not satisfactory simply to "take the rest of the period." The time should be consistent week after week so that testing conditions are kept uniform.
5. The length of most of the letters dictated should approximate that of an average business letter (roughly 100-150 words), although occasional shorter and longer letters are appropriate.
6. Dictate enough letters (usually 4-5) to keep all the students busy for the full transcription period. As a measure of quantity, it is preferable that no student be able to finish all the letters dictated.
7. If possible, dictate all the letters on a given production test on the same topic—insurance, real estate, publishing, etc.
8. Dictate the lowest rate first and proceed to the higher rates—60-70-80-90 wpm, for example. (These rates should be somewhat lower—about 20 wpm lower, perhaps—than the highest rates at which you dictate shorthand speed takes.)
9. As a means of providing for individual differences, you may wish to dictate the letters in sequence from shortest to longest. For example, the shortest letter might be dictated at the lowest rate (60 wpm, perhaps), the next shortest at the next lowest rate (70 wpm, perhaps), and so on.
10. If the letters are dictated in a lowest-to-highest (dictation rate) and shortest-to-longest (length) sequence, students should be instructed to transcribe the letters in the order in which they were dictated.
11. Students should be supplied with inside addresses and signature elements.
12. In the final stages of instruction, students should prepare carbon copies and envelopes for all transcribed letters.
13. This type of evaluation should continue as long as the student studies shorthand. It is the most valid and most realistic method of measuring transcription production ability in the terminal stages of instruction.

Scoring Transcription Production Tests

Shorthand teachers use a variety of plans in evaluating transcription performance. The one

described below is illustrative. While it is perhaps lacking in sophistication, it has the advantages of being simple, workable, and easy to understand.

1. Although mailability is a desirable goal, it may not be reached by most students until the terminal stages of instruction. Evaluating transcripts solely on the basis of mailability may result in an unusually high proportion of low or failing scores. Consequently, an intermediate scoring plan that does not demand total mailability may be necessary.

2. A simple, workable intermediate plan based on the number of errors made on each transcribed letter is as follows:

Errors	*Points*
0	4 (A)
1	3 (B)
2	2 (C)
3	1 (D)

3. If you wish a more sophisticated point system than this basic plan, letter length and rate of dictation may also be considered. More points may be awarded for longer letters than shorter letters and for higher dictation rates than lower rates.

4. This scoring plan has the disadvantage of not distinguishing among various types of errors or their seriousness. This is, however, a minor, not a major, flaw.

5. The use of this plan makes it unnecessary to figure the transcription rate, which is a useful practice device but is an artificiality that has limited value in a testing situation.

6. During each transcription session of at least 30 continuous minutes' duration, students attempt to transcribe as many letters as possible and to transcribe them as accurately as possible. In this way both quantity and quality are taken into account in the scoring; the students who transcribe the most letters with the highest quality get the greatest number of points.

7. Points may be accumulated during the grading period and grades then assigned on whatever basis the teacher feels is appropriate. Be sure to keep students informed about the number of points they have accumulated. One good way of doing this is to post periodically (weekly, perhaps) the number of possible points and the actual number of points accumulated by each student; the points earned are posted anonymously, of course.

8. When your students are ready for more demanding standards (perhaps in the final shorthand course), scoring the letters on a mailable/unmailable basis becomes a more realistic evaluation plan. A simple procedure is to award 3 points for each perfect letter and 2 points for each mailable letter (but no points for correctable letters). A refinement is to award additional points for longer letters and for higher dictation rates.

9. In the final instructional phase, students should retype unmailable letters until they are mailable. This procedure adds a note of realism, since it corresponds to actual practice in the business world. If the above plan of awarding 3 points for a perfect and 2 points for a mailable letter is followed, then 1 point might be given for each retyped letter when it is produced in mailable form.

INCREASING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE STENOGRAPHIC PROGRAM

Selection of Prospective Students

Business teachers have traditionally been concerned about the quality of students who elect the stenographic program. Employers, too, are concerned because they look to the high school to provide them with well-prepared stenographers. Although a student should not be refused the opportunity to pursue a stenographic program in a public high school, the teacher has an obligation to help the student realistically assess the prospects for success in such a program.

Success in shorthand and transcription is based on a variety of factors:

1. *Intelligence.* Generally the student should possess average or, preferably, better than average ability. Students of less than average ability usually do not acquire employable shorthand and transcription skill.

2. *Grade-Point Average.* The cumulative grade-point average also bears a relationship to shorthand and transcription achievement. The student who has done well in the past in overall academic work will probably also do well in shorthand and transcription.

3. *English.* Achievement in transcription is based on factors directly related to competency in English skills. Comprehensive and discriminating English tests can be used to measure each student's ability, preferably before enrollment in shorthand, so that the results can be used in counseling. Such tests are useful in uncovering specific weaknesses in spelling, punctuation, and word usage.

4. *Typewriting.* Students cannot realize the full potential of their shorthand skill unless their typewriting skill has also been adequately developed. Students who are deficient in typewriting skill should not be encouraged to take shorthand.

5. *Attendance.* Regular attendance is essential. Skill building is based on daily instruction and practice. Each new lesson builds on the previous one, and the student who has a record of frequent absences should be aware of the consequences of missing class. There is no program in the entire school curriculum in which regular attendance is more important.

6. *Student Objective.* Perhaps no factor is more vital for success in the stenographic program than the objective of the student. Students may select the program at random with little knowledge of what is involved and, once enrolled, discover that a great deal of hard work is required. Consequently, students without a real vocational objective may drop out or fail. On the other hand, students who have a well-formulated vocational objective in mind add purpose to their educational program and increase their chances for success.

Counselors and business teachers have the responsibility for acquainting students with the opportunities that are available to them in stenographic occupations after graduation. Students also need to be informed that placement and advancement in stenographic positions is dependent upon the development of overall educational, personal, and social competencies. The role of the stenographic teacher in helping students achieve those competencies is indeed a significant one.

Homework Assignments

Homework assignments in shorthand are important! In other courses there may be some question as to whether homework really results in higher student achievement. In shorthand classes, however, there is no doubt that homework assignments are a vitally important and indispensable activity; *they do make a difference.* Because class time is short, a good deal of the actual learning of shorthand must occur outside of class through the right kind of homework preparation.

Because homework in shorthand is important, you as the teacher must try in every way imaginable to stress its importance and to motivate students to do it properly. Here are two ways to do so.

Vary homework assignments as you progress through shorthand instruction.

Shorthand homework assignments have tended to become excessively standarized and therefore monotonous to students, who quickly tire of the sameness of the homework routine. The same old type of assignment prepared in the same old way day after day and month after month becomes a dreadful bore after a while. The result is perfunctory homework preparation; students frequently do their assignments superficially and mechanically while their attention is actually focused somewhere else—on television, perhaps. One way to make shorthand assignments more appealing and meaningful to students is to vary them as you progress through shorthand instruction.

1. Design homework assignments so that they correspond to the principal objectives being emphasized in the instruction. Reading and copying shorthand plates, for example, is an entirely appropriate kind of shorthand assignment in the early stages of instruction when students are learning how to read and write shorthand outlines fluently; but it is obviously not an appropriate type of assignment in the final stages of instruction when the primary classroom emphasis is on mailable transcription.
2. A helpful rule of thumb is that as soon as you feel that a particular homework practice has outlived its usefulness, discontinue that practice and move on to another one.
3. One traditional and persistent type of homework assignment that gradually outlives its usefulness is copying from shorthand plates. After you feel confident of the students' ability to write shorthand outlines fluently, no useful purpose is served by continuing to have shorthand plates copied for homework assignments. The type of writing practice needed by advanced students is more realistically supplied through plentiful and challenging dictation in class.
4. Look for innovative ways to perk up homework assignments and make them more purposeful to students. Have you considered rapid, timed reading of shorthand plates and notes? Transcribing from print into longhand? Developing vocabulary lists of troublesome shorthand outlines? English drills and proofreading exercises for advanced classes? Homework activities such as these can add interest and depth to shorthand learning.
5. Remember, finally, that variety for the sake of variety has no merit. The principal criterion in designing homework assignments is to make them relevant and supportive of your classroom instruction rather than to vary them merely for the sake of change.

Be sure that students clearly understand homework preparation procedures.

Another reason students may not do their homework assignments to the teacher's satis-

faction is that perhaps the importance of the homework is not being sufficiently stressed by the teacher. Perhaps, too, the homework preparation procedures may be fuzzy in the students' minds and the steps to be followed not clearly enough defined.

1. Do not be satisfied with "Take the next lesson for tomorrow" as a homework assignment. In the early stages of instruction, the next lesson must be thoroughly taught, of course. But even in the advanced stages, the next day's lesson should be well previewed. Doing so helps to emphasize the significant learnings in tomorrow's lesson; it also helps to attach more importance to the assignment than it might otherwise have to the students.
2. At any time that you change the content and format of the homework assignment, type up a check list of the homework preparation procedures and give a copy to each of the students. To make the assignment as unambiguous as possible, number and list the steps to be followed in chronological order. Then insist that the steps be followed without deviation day after day.

To expect the suggestions given here to solve all the problems associated with shorthand homework would be naive and unrealistic. Rather, the intent of the suggestions has been to stimulate your thinking about ways in which homework assignments can perhaps be revitalized and made more interesting and relevant to students. If that purpose is achieved, then this brief discussion will have proved worthwhile.

How to Time Shorthand Dictation

Two points need to be made about how to dictate.

First, *dictate naturally.* Employ the same normal pauses and varying cadences that you use conversationally. Artificialities such as rushing the dictation of phrases or dictating metronomically are unnatural and may prove to be a hindrance to students rather than a help.

Second, *dictate precisely.* To time dictation with precision requires a stopwatch; an ordinary watch, even if it has a sweep-second hand, is unsatisfactory. Also needed is a dictation chart, which you can obtain free from the publisher of your shorthand textbook. Or you can make your own, using the figures given in the following information on the mechanics of timing dictation.

Marking of Dictation Materials

Dictation materials are usually marked in one of two ways: 20-word intervals or 15-second intervals. The first method is more frequently used.

20-Word Intervals

The first method is 20-word intervals, based on standard words. A *standard word* has a syllabic intensity (SI) of 1.4. This is an arbitrary unit of measurement which can be compared to the 5 strokes per word used in typewriting classes for straight-copy materials. Since it is arbitrary, however, it does not necessarily indicate accurately the degree of difficulty of the dictated material. Other pertinent factors that affect difficulty, in addition to syllabic intensity, include the number of frequently used words, difficulty of the vocabulary used, the subject matter, sentence construction, and punctuation.

For some materials the SI is stated at the end of each letter. A letter with an SI of 1.5 is supposed to be less difficult than a letter with an SI of 1.6. This is not always the case, however, because of the factors mentioned above.

A *standard word group* consists of 20 standard words or 28 syllables (20 x 1.4 = 28). This is a handy figure to remember because it allows you to mark off dictation materials your-

self if you feel it is necessary or advisable to do so. Simply count off 28 syllables and use a superior number or diagonal to indicate the end of each standard word group. This is the way that most textbook instructional materials are marked.

When dictating materials marked in 20-word intervals, use the following procedure:

If you are dictating at 40 wpm, allot 30 seconds to each standard word group. Thus:

50 wpm	24 seconds
60	20
70	17
80*	15
90	13
100	12
110	11
120	10
130	9
140	8

*80 = compatible rate

15-Second Intervals

The second method is 15-second intervals, or quarter-minutes. Materials marked in this way are used mostly for testing purposes. When dictating materials marked in 15-second intervals, simply let a quarter-minute elapse between superior numbers or diagonals, regardless of the rate of the dictation.

Materials marked in this way are usually not nearly so flexible and adaptable for classroom speed-building practice as materials marked in 20-word intervals. The exception is 80 wpm material, which happens to contain 28 syllables in each standard group and also in each 15-second interval—thus its compatibility.

Conversion charts are available for adapting 20-word material for dictation in 15-second intervals and vice versa. They frequently require the use of rather awkward numbers, however, and may therefore be a bit cumbersome.

Use of the Shorthand Laboratory

The shorthand laboratory, which makes use of various types of audio equipment designed to facilitate teaching and learning, has been widely accepted as a valuable instructional tool. Its usefulness in providing individualized instruction, relieving the teacher of much routine dictation, and increasing the teacher's classroom efficiency has been demonstrated repeatedly. As a result, typical teacher reaction has been favorable.

The shorthand lab, therefore, has great potential as a teaching adjunct. Its potential can be fully realized, however, only if it is used effectively. Regardless of the type of audio equipment you have or its degree of sophistication, following the suggestions below should help you increase the usefulness of such equipment.

1. *Do not eliminate oral teacher dictation entirely.* Some teachers have concluded that taped dictation replaces oral teacher dictation completely and have, as a result, discontinued dictating to the class themselves. That conclusion is erroneous. Taped dictation—whether professionally prepared or teacher prepared—should supplement, not replace, oral teacher dictation. There is no substitute for the frequent live dictation provided "on the spot" by the teacher.

2. *Continue to use previews and postviews.* Previews and postviews of troublesome shorthand outlines are as valuable in individualized taped dictation practice as they are in group practice. At times an appropriate instructional procedure is a teacher-directed group preview or postview by means of the chalkboard or the overhead projector. At other times previously prepared preview/postview sheets may be provided. If it is possible to laminate the sheets in plastic, they will better withstand the frequent use they normally receive.

3. *Use your freed time productively.* While the lab is dictating for you, you are free to give individual students the personalized instruction that would otherwise be impossible. Use your released time to observe students unobtrusively as they take dictation; to demonstrate how to sit, hold the pen, write, and handle the notebook; to answer students' questions about troublesome outlines; to diagnose learning difficulties; to check student progress; to offer encouragement and reassurance; and even to do a little tactful prodding when necessary. This freed teacher time can be extremely helpful to students when it is spent productively.

4. *Do not rely exclusively on commercially prepared tapes.* Experience has shown that students generally respond much more enthusiastically to teacher-made tapes than they do to professional tapes. Although preparing your own dictation tapes is a very time-consuming activity, you will find that the favorable student response to them makes it time well spent. Using a combination of commercial and teacher-made tapes adds variety to the class routine and helps to maintain student interest.

5. *Have your students keep daily progress charts.* A constant effort should be made to insure that student practice is not aimless. All students should have clearly established goals, and their progress toward those goals should be recorded daily. The record maintained by individual students should be frequently checked by the teacher so that progress toward goals can be readily determined and new goals established as previously set goals are reached. Unless their work is carefully monitored, some students will tend to waste time.

6. *Do not overdo the use of the shorthand lab.* Despite the usefulness of taped dictation as a teaching adjunct, students become bored and time seems to drag unmercifully when its use is prolonged and continuous day after day. Therefore, use taped dictation judiciously. Short but frequent group activities should be interspersed with individualized dictation practice to keep student interest high. A useful rule of thumb is that individual taped dictation sessions normally should not exceed 15-20 minutes at any one time.

7. *Try to provide opportunities for out-of-class practice with the laboratory equipment.* If you are able to make the shorthand laboratory available to students for use during study periods, after school, or at other convenient times during the day, the additional practice they get can pay big dividends in terms of student progress. Encourage the students to take advantage of this opportunity to increase their dictation-taking skill.

8. *Look for new and different ways to utilize the shorthand laboratory.* Although taped dictation practice remains the most frequent use of the shorthand lab, innovative teachers have discovered a number of other ways to utilize the equipment. These include homework preparation, checking of homework, English exercises, personalized remedial instruction, checking of transcripts, shorthand and transcription testing, and make-up work. These examples point up the flexibility and potential of the equipment and emphasize its versatility as an instructional medium.

9. *Do not expect the shorthand lab to make your job easier.* Shorthand teachers have discovered, sometimes

to their surprise, that the use of shorthand lab equipment has actually increased rather than reduced the complexity of instruction. Additional teacher planning is necessary to meet the individualized needs of students. The preparation of teacher-made tapes is extremely time consuming. The equipment must be properly maintained and the tapes catalogued and accounted for. The result is added responsibility on you and extra demands on your time. Nevertheless, most teachers feel that the benefits of the lab are well worth the additional effort required.

10. *Remember that the teacher is still the key to effective learning.* Some teachers have perhaps placed too much reliance on shorthand laboratory equipment. Consequently, it is worth emphasizing here that the shorthand lab teaches *with* you, not *for* you. The laboratory does not get the desired results; *you do.* The lab does not replace you; it simply supports you in your instructional efforts. In the final analysis, the effectiveness of the equipment—and the results it produces—depends upon the ability of the teacher to use it to the greatest advantage.

Making Stenographic Instruction More Realistic

A great deal of emphasis should be placed in occupational preparation programs on making the instruction realistic. Related activities are integrated to permit students to learn under conditions that resemble as closely as possible the conditions that prevail in actual office situations. Consequently, students get a truer picture, in terms of both time and duties, of what working in an office is really like.

The suggestions that follow focus on ways to provide realistic classroom instruction in the stenographic program so that students can reach a higher level of vocational competence, resulting in a greater ability to meet the requirements and expectations of the business world.

1. *Selection of Instructional Topics.* Spend your instructional time on the knowledges and skills that are essential to a stenographic job. There are many topics included in textbooks that are "nice to know." Since time is limited, however, and you cannot teach them all, spend class time on those things that every stenographic worker *needs to know.* The primary criterion for choosing instructional topics, then, is necessity rather than desirability. An intensive study of legal terms and their shorthand outlines, for example, might be a very desirable activity but one that would be essential only for those students interested in a career as a legal secretary.

2. *Decision-Making Ability.* Develop decision-making ability from the very beginning of instruction. If students are not expected to make their own decisions, they will depend on the teacher to make their decisions for them. Do not give students excessive help in estimating the length of a letter to be transcribed, determining the length of typewriter line to use, or deciphering hard-to-read shorthand outlines. Business requires its employees to make routine decisions for themselves; you should do the same in the classroom.

3. *Understanding Instructions.* Pay particular attention to the giving and understanding of instructions. That maddening habit that students frequently fall into of asking the teacher to repeat the directions two or three times is as unnecessary as it is irritating. Probably the best way to impress upon students the necessity of getting instructions

right the first time is to have them jot down the instructions as they are given. This is the practice followed in offices, and it is equally appropriate in the classroom.

4. *Meeting Office Standards.* In advanced stenographic classes, have work done over until it is acceptable by office standards. Students in the terminal stages of instruction must develop the ability to produce work that would be acceptable by a discerning employer in the business world. This ability can be developed in the classroom by requiring students to redo unacceptable work until it meets office standards.

5. *Self-Evaluation of Student Work.* Insist that students evaluate the acceptability of their own work. An employer puts the responsibility for evaluating an employee's work where it properly belongs—on the employee himself. A teacher who is attempting to duplicate office conditions as faithfully as possible in the classroom returns student work unmarked and expects the students to find their own errors, giving only as much help as is needed.

6. *Improvement of English Skills.* Place a great deal of emphasis on the improvement of English skills. Every business teacher is familiar with the complaint that beginning office workers have difficulty in handling written English. That complaint should not be dismissed as regrettable but one that nobody can do anything about. Daily drills on the various aspects of correct English usage — spelling, punctuation, capitalization, abbreviations, expression of numbers, word division, frequently confused words, and the like — can result in marked improvement over a period of time.

7. *Proofreading Skills.* Put constant stress on proofreading skills. It is not enough to deplore student inability to proofread as accurately as teachers would like; *something must be done about it.* Neither is it enough simply to tell students to proofread carefully; they must be *taught* to do so. Since students are human and are therefore subject to human error, development of the ability to proofread with complete accuracy is an impossible goal; nevertheless, there is no doubt that proofreading ability can be considerably improved through proper teaching.

8. *Detection of Errors.* Give students instructional material that contains errors. Stenographic employees are needed who are more than copyists. Since the copy given to office employees is rarely error-free, they must be able to detect mistakes and inconsistencies and make the necessary corrections. The only way to develop this ability in students is to give them contextual copy that contains occasional errors—perhaps a word incorrectly spelled, a word incorrectly used, a sentence incorrectly punctuated, a column of figures incorrectly totaled, or a number incorrectly expressed. Material of this kind is infrequently found in textbooks, so it may be necessary to develop your own.

9. *Value of Time.* Make students aware of the value of time. For on-the-job performance, accuracy is probably more valued than speed; however, an employee must be able to produce a reasonable amount of work within a reasonable length of time. Almost all classroom work, whether under practice or test conditions, should be timed and frequent mention made of time standards observed in offices. The purpose, it should be

added, is not to pressure students unmercifully; rather, it is simply to make them conscious of the fact that efficiency, in the office or in the classroom, requires that time be productively used.

10. *Use of Office Simulations.* Use simulations as a culminating activity. Whenever practicable, end each grading period with a simulated project to give the students a more realistic experience and to encompass a variety of office tasks. Both commercial and teacher-prepared simulations can be used. A flow-of-work simulation can be used effectively during the advanced phases of instruction.

FBLA Competitive Events for Stenographers

Future Business Leaders of America, the co-curricular organization for high school students in business education, is an integral part of the overall business education program. Stenography students should become members of FBLA and become involved in its wide range of useful activities.

Among the activities are the Stenographer I and Stenographer II competitive events that are held at the regional, state, and national levels and are described in the following material taken from the handbook of the Virginia chapter of FBLA. You will find this information helpful in acquainting stenography students with these competitive events and encouraging their participation.

STENOGRAPHER I

Shorthand skill is one of the requirements for a stenographic/secretarial position. This event will measure the ability to transcribe mailable letters from dictation at varying speeds.

Eligibility

Each local chapter may enter one member in the event at the spring regional meeting. A participant may not have had more than one school year of shorthand instruction. A participant may be enrolled in a beginning shorthand course or in Stenography I of an occupational preparation program. The participant receiving a *first place* rating at the regional meeting will participate at the Annual State Leadership Conference.

Procedure

One hour will be allowed for this event, including time for the warm-up and general directions. The test will be so long that only an exceptional member will be able to transcribe all the letters dictated. All material must be transcribed verbatim for scoring. Results will be based on mailable copy. Letters that could be sent through the mail with slight reservation will receive reduced credit. Unmailable copy will not be considered in scoring.

Any of the following will make the copy unmailable: failure to follow specific directions, uncorrected errors, strikeovers, noticeable corrections and erasures, misspelled words, inserted or omitted words, transposed words, poor placement, failure to paragraph or serious paragraph errors, serious punctuation errors, serious word division errors, and omission of essential parts of a letter.

Any acceptable letter style may be used. Paragraphing and punctuation will not be dictated.

Two letters will be dictated at 80 words per minute, two at 90 words per minute, and two at 100 words per minute. Typical business letters will be dictated.

Participants may transcribe the letters in whatever order they choose, but additional credit will be given for the letters dictated at the higher speeds. No credit will be given for an incomplete letter unless it is the one that is being transcribed when time is called.

Typewriters and letterheads will be supplied. Participants will provide their own shorthand notebooks, pens and pencils, erasers or correction materials, and reference materials (dictionaries or reference manuals).

STENOGRAPHER II

Shorthand is one of the essential skills for the complete secretary/stenographer. This event will evaluate the ability to transcribe mailable letters from dictation at varying speeds.

Eligibility

Each local chapter may enter one member in the event at the spring regional meeting. A participant must have had more than one year of shorthand instruction. A participant may be enrolled in an advanced shorthand course or in Stenography II of an occupational preparation program. The participant receiving a *first place* rating at the regional meeting will participate at the Annual State Leadership Conference.

Procedure

One hour will be allowed for this event, including time for the warm-up and general directions. The test will be so long that only an exceptional participant will be able to transcribe all the letters dictated. All material must be transcribed verbatim for scoring. Results will be based on mailable copy. Letters that could be sent through the mail with slight reservation will receive reduced credit. Unmailable copy will not be considered in scoring.

Any of the following will make the copy unmailable: failure to follow specific directions, uncorrected errors, strikeovers, noticeable corrections and erasures, misspelled words, inserted or omitted words, transposed words, poor placement, failure to paragraph or serious paragraph errors, serious punctuation errors, serious word division errors, and omission of essential parts of a letter.

Any acceptable letter style may be used. Paragraphing and punctuation will not be dictated.

Two letters will be dictated at 100 words per minute, two at 110 words per minute, and two at 120 words per minute. Typical business letters will be dictated. Carbon copies may be requested.

Participants may transcribe the letters in whatever order they choose, but additional credit will be given for the letters dictated at the higher speeds. No credit will be given for an incomplete letter unless it is the one that is being transcribed when time is called.

Typewriters and letterheads will be supplied. Participants will provide their own shorthand notebooks, pens and pencils, erasers or correction materials, and reference materials (dictionaries or reference manuals).

Evaluating a Stenographic Program

How well is your stenographic program accomplishing its primary mission of helping students gain the competencies they will need to perform satisfactorily in an office job? One way to answer that question is to compare the competencies you are emphasizing in your program with the competencies that stenographic employees are actually called upon to perform in the business world.

A high school teacher who decided to make this kind of comparison first interviewed a number of employers to determine the duties performed by persons in stenographic positions. Based on the results of her interviews, she then formulated a list of the 20 job competencies she felt should be mastered by her students. The list she developed can be used by other teachers to evaluate their own stenographic programs.

When students complete *your* stenographic program, how many of the following competencies do they possess?

1. File and retrieve documents
2. Type by the touch method at vocationally acceptable rates

3. Type in acceptable form
   - From handwritten copy
   - From typed copy
   - Envelopes
   - Letters
   - Carbon copies
   - Standard business forms
   - Interoffice correspondence
   - Stencils
   - Fluid masters
   - Index cards
4. Efficiently operate a/an
   - Electric typewriter
   - Executive typewriter
   - Memory typewriter
   - Magnetic card and magnetic tape word processing typewriters
5. Proofread typed copy and make acceptable corrections of errors
6. Compose routine business letters
7. Type mailable transcripts of letters and other documents including dates, addresses, and times from voice dictated transcription belts using a transcribing machine
8. Take dictation, using shorthand, at vocationally acceptable speeds and transcribe from shorthand notes into mailable form
9. Demonstrate acceptable secretarial procedures
10. Demonstrate grooming acceptable to an office situation
11. Understand the importance of businesslike attitudes and behavior
12. Demonstrate courteous and businesslike telephone techniques and accurately record telephone messages
13. Greet callers in person and route them to the proper individual
14. Schedule appointments
15. Process incoming and outgoing mail
16. Locate particular information from appropriate reference books and directories
17. Calculate the answers to basic math and business math problems
18. Compute and maintain financial records
19. Write words and numbers legibly in longhand
20. Prepare job application forms and letters, prepare a résumé, and prepare for a job interview.*

*This list of stenographic job competencies was prepared by Mrs. Patricia Duschka, a business teacher at Luther Burbank High School, Sacramento, California. It is reprinted here from the August 1975 issue of *Modern Office Procedures* (copyrighted 1975 by Industrial Publishing Company, a division of Pittway Corporation).

The Challenge That Awaits You

The teaching of shorthand and transcription presents a special challenge to you. Yours is the challenge of preparing stenographic students who are vocationally competent—students who have the necessary skills, knowledges, attitudes, and work habits to obtain and advance in responsible office positions. It is a challenge that demands the best you have to give.

It Takes Confidence. So your work is cut out for you. To do the best possible job, you must, of course, have confidence in yourself and in your ability to teach shorthand and transcription. That confidence comes from knowing what you are doing—knowing how a skill is developed, devising sound teaching strategies, being able to direct students in effective and productive learning activities, and knowing how to use class time to the best advantage.

It Takes Enthusiasm, Too. Success comes, too, from the enthusiasm that you bring to the

classroom. A teacher who is enthusiastic about stenography and is enthusiastic about teaching it can transfer that enthusiasm to the students. The result is then a learning situation that is lively, varied, and interesting for both the student and the teacher.

The Job Ahead. For both the new and the experienced teacher of shorthand and transcription, the responsibility of guiding students through the vitally important stages of stenographic instruction is a challenging and exciting opportunity. May it be a richly rewarding experience for you and for those you teach!